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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the implementation and support of a data-driven decision-making evaluation system developed by the San Francisco (California) school district to assess programs within the district aimed at improving achievement for students of color, especially African American and Latino students. In 1982, a Consent Decree was established to meet the goals of desegregation of San Francisco's schools. Under the Consent Decree, the school district receives state money to implement programs for targeted students. An evaluation model was developed to assess these programs. The model focuses on: (1) project description; (2) professional development; (3) qualitative evaluation; (4) quantitative evaluation; and (5) budget considerations. The model can be used with a range of programs while still providing specific information about key areas of concern to school district administrators and the Board of Education. Participatory evaluation is a feature of the model, and outcome evaluation is an essential aspect. The experiences of the San Francisco school district with this approach have shown that it is possible to develop and implement an evaluation approach that can be used for many projects. (Contains 9 references.) (SLD)

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Assessing Achievement Effects of Desegregation Programs: The Role of a Program Evaluation and Research Department

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Assessing Achievement Effects of Desegregation Programs:

The Role of a Program Evaluation and Research Department

Introduction:

In recent years, there has been much attention to the relationship between achievement and desegregation programs in large urban districts in the United States. As pressure has come from many sectors in communities to end desegregation, there is evidence that ending court-ordered desegregation can have deleterious effects on student achievement for low-income minority students (Orfield et al., 1996). In Norfolk, Virginia, one year after the courts declared the schools sufficiently integrated, test scores fell for both white and African American students (Ipka, 1993). At the same time, some researchers have questioned whether desegregation programs are effective in helping improve student achievement, suggesting that rising economic opportunities for African American students explain better rising test scores for African Americans in desegregated districts (Armor, 1992). In the current political context, in which desegregation programs are being challenged in court and being debated among researchers, it is critical to develop systems within districts to measure the effects of programs (both individual and district-wide) aimed at improving educational opportunities for students of color.

There have been only a few studies that have examined the effects of programs that are funded within districts to address the academic needs of students targeted by desegregation and integration efforts. These studies, moreover, have been typically limited to studies of a single program in a district (e.g., Stanford & Bellott, 1982).

The objective of the current study is to describe the implementation and support of a data-driven decision-making evaluation system developed by one district to assess a multitude of programs within the district aimed at improving achievement for students of color, particularly African American and Latino students.

Institution of the Consent Decree in San Francisco

San Francisco students have attained achievement levels above the national average in spite of both the fact that we are educating increasing numbers of children effected by poverty and that the State education funding is markedly below average-- California ranked 22nd among

the states in 1978 and has since plummeted to 41st place among the states in the amount spent per child (Digest of Educational Statistics). This resilience is in part due to special programs that have been instituted, through the demand of the courts, that minimize segregation and help students succeed in school.

In 1982 in District Federal Court, the NAACP and SFUSD came to an agreement about a Consent Decree to meet the goals of desegregation of San Francisco's schools. Far from being a supplemental program for a handful of schools, the Consent Decree has had a systemic influence on the entire School District's belief and expectation that all children are capable of achieving at high levels regardless of ethnicity, language, or family income level. While much remains to be done to eliminate gaps in achievement and other outcomes, the Consent Decree has made great progress toward creating educational equity and excellence for all of our students. In the words of a 1992 report by a Court-appointed Committee of Experts:

> "[The Consent Decree] has made possible one of the most extensive educational reform efforts that have been carried out in the last generation in an urban school district."

The goals of the Consent Decree have been twofold:

1. Continued and accelerated efforts to achieve academic excellence for all students, with a particular focus on African American and Latino youngsters, the lowest performing groups
2. Elimination of racial/ethnic segregation and identifiability in SFUSD schools, classrooms and programs

In linking the goal of academic achievement with that of desegregation, San Francisco's Consent Decree stands out as unique from most other desegregation court orders or consent decrees in the U.S. The Consent Decree's process of reshaping the educational culture and expectations of the San Francisco Unified School District has benefited not only African American and Latino students, but all of the District's students and schools, and has done so against powerful societal odds.

Supporting Programmatic Efforts by Accounting for Success

Through the Consent Decree, the District receives $32 million from the state annually to implement programs for targeted students that support the Consent Decree's goals, which are to integrate all public schools in San Francisco and to increase academic excellence of targeted students. Court monitors and a committee of experts supervised the achievement of the two goals. The monies were distributed to schools, administrative staff and to programs that served the two goals. It was seen that extensive reports were produced accounting for the success of the schools, but no evaluation of the programs was done. The Board of Education Commissioners, state monitors, and the district's Committee of Experts consistently stressed that the effectiveness of educational programs on student achievement was not being assessed.

In July, 1994, incoming Assistant Superintendent for Consent Decree programs, Dr. Tony Anderson, selected the top ten programs (identified because their costs exceeded $100,000) for evaluation. These programs included well-known names like Reading Recovery, Success For All, Step to College as well as a host of locally-sponsored ones. The Research, Planning and Evaluation (RPE) was called upon to determine a plan for evaluating the performance of these programs during the 1993/94 academic year. Action taken by the RPE involved establishing a model for program evaluation.

RPE developed an evaluation model for the District which may be used with a range of projects while still providing specific information about areas of key concern to District administrators and the Board of Education. The model focused on the five areas described below:

- Project description—this encompassed descriptions of involved populations, project goals and objectives, implementation framework and strategies, student selection strategies, and indicators or benchmarks that project administrators intended on using to judge project impacts.
- Professional development—this was an examination of the project efforts to engage in continuous improvement, to make schools self sufficient or to institutionalize the program.
- A qualitative evaluation—this component included surveys/interviews of stakeholder groups (school staff, students and parents) and on-going site visits to document implementation.

- A quantitative evaluation—this component was tied to the specific goals and objectives of the District, used experimental and quasi-experimental designs, with the data maintained by the District about such areas as gpa, attendance, suspensions, and standardized test scores to determine effectiveness.
- A budget—this component involved a cost benefit analysis detailing whether the level of expenditures were both consistent with the level of effort the project demanded. Further it tracked direct verses indirect cost of services to students. Similar programs were compared on their per student cost.

During the 1994-95 school year the above evaluation model was designed to accommodate the diverse project mix and the multiple areas where projects were anticipated to impact students. District staff, the Superintendent, and the Board of Education were encouraged by the results from the ten evaluations. We found a broad evaluation approach could be used which was both flexible and still provided valuable formative and summative information about projects.

The evaluation model was accepted and adopted by the Board of Education. On July 13, 1995 the Board of Education Resolution No. 55-23A2 was adopted. It stated that all instructional/intervention programs should have an evaluation component and that all evaluations will have sound educational assessment designs. Action taken by the newly restructured Research, Planning and Evaluation (RPE) Department involved reviewing the evaluation component of all board resolutions. Training workshops on the subject of evaluation was provided to all administrators.

Development and Implementation of the Evaluation Model

The evaluation model could be used with a range of programs while still providing specific information about areas of key concern to District administrators and the Board of Education. The first step in this process was development of a plan for identification of the educational interventions that would require a more comprehensive evaluation. This was necessary to account for the vast variety of interventions that take place in the District. A rubric was designed to help administrators and external agencies link the objectives of the intervention to its outcomes. The rubric was defined in terms of levels with each level directly corresponding to the appropriate type of evaluation that should take place. It then became a requirement that

administrators specify their goals and define the level of evaluation required for every resolution request that goes before the Board of Education. The evaluation discussed in this paper is reserved for Level IV evaluations. Interventions whose activities fall under Levels 1, 2, and 3 are required to file in-house evaluation reports so that their administrators are accountable for faithful implementation of project activities.

Table 1: Description of Evaluation Levels

If the objective of the activities or services is...	The level of evaluation that will be required is...	Type of Evaluation
to complete a task or produce a product or to expose participants to the activities or services	Level I	A record that the task or activity has taken place
to expose participants to the activities or services and to collect feedback regarding their perceptions	Level II	A post survey that collects feedback which will inform upon the delivery of the intervention
to change the attitude or opinion of the participants	Level III	A pre- and post survey that assesses whether attitudes or opinions have changed
to change the behavior of the participants	Level IV	A full evaluation that assesses appropriate implementation of the intervention and its effectiveness to change specified behavioral outcome

The Consent Decree provides support for a number of effective programs throughout the District which have been identified as needing Level IV evaluations. These programs target the academic success of a diverse audience of students throughout the District and involve a number of stakeholders in the educational process. From direct intervention with targeted groups of students to district-wide support programs, professional development programs to parental and community involvement, these programs work in concert towards academic success of all students throughout the district. On the following page, Table 2 provides a brief description of goals, implementation and outcomes of some of the educational interventions funded through the Consent Decree that were evaluated by RPE.

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Table 2: Description of Some of the Consent Decree Funded Programs Evaluated Using the RPE Evaluation Model

Program Goals	Program Implementation	Program Outcomes
Promote scholastic achievement of AA/Latino students	provides accelerated academic courses on a college campus, supplemented with educational enrichment and support structures to ensure student success	The number of students taking advanced placement and honors classes increased among those participating in the program, and students confirm that the program gave a glimpse of university life.
To improve the performances and prospects of African American students	A K-8 "culture rich" language and mathematics literacy intervention. The program supports professional development, curriculum, instructional improvement in language arts and mathematics, and community support to reach these students	Students whose teachers were professionally developed showed growth on a standardized test in math. Participants said that the program was successful with targeted groups of students.
A youth development program that empowers students with the skills they need to be effective leaders who service their peers, schools, and communities	Implemented in all 17 of San Francisco's middle schools and in eight high schools. Last year, the program trained over 800 "peer educators," who in turn served over 10,000 other students.	Program participants are more likely to have better grades, stay in school, stay out of gangs, stay drug free and involve themselves in alternative positive activities.
Intensive reading program aimed at organizing resources at the school site to ensure that virtually every student will reach third grade with a foundation of basic skills necessary for future academic success	Program includes staff development, non-graded reading blocks, one-on-one reading tutors, specialized reading material and a family support team including social services as needed	Almost 1000 students in three schools benefited from the program in 3 different schools. Participating students showed more than a year's gain on a standardized reading test.

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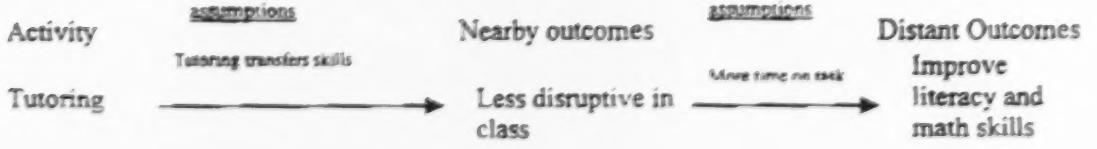
The Level IV evaluation model was later revisited and extended to accommodate the various needs of all stakeholders involved. To evaluate the effectiveness of these programs, two components were used—a process component and an outcome component. As the evaluation procedure began to take shape and improve, it became clear that if programs were going to use results effectively for program improvement, evaluation could not be seen as threatening. Therefore RPE currently employs an approach to evaluation that is participatory (Cousins & Earl, 1992), utilization-focused (Patton, 1986; 1994), and integrated with processes of continuous improvement and program planning (Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 1996). Moreover, the model is based on the idea that participation of program directors and coordinators in the evaluation process is key to ensuring that program planners and managers use the evaluation data to support decision-making. The involvement of program directors and coordinators has the potential to encourage program staff to think more systematically about the relationship between program activities and objectives. Such systematic reflection would be aimed at building a "culture of learning" (Patton, 1997, p. 147) to lead to continuous program improvement.

The RPE employs participatory evaluation in several ways. For one, the department tries to work closely with program directors to help insure that intervention activities are closely connected with desired outcomes. In the third year of instituting the evaluation model, RPE began to conduct on-going discussions and meetings with program staff that focus on making connections made between activities and distant outcomes. Below is an excerpt of a matrix created by program staff in conjunction with the evaluator. The staff was asked to identify all activities that would be a part of the program. They were then asked to identify the desired outcomes and their assumptions underlying why they believed participation in the activity would lead to the outcomes they had specified. The creation of this matrix was a crucial step in insuring that programmatic design would lead to desired outcomes.



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The RPE works with program directors to help specify goals, identify benchmarks, and generate appropriate measures of program success. In this regard, both the evaluator and the program administrators have a mutually defined understanding of what they are being held accountable to achieve. The creation of survey instruments is also done with the input of the program staff. This insures that the questions asked of the program participants will generate data that is both useful for making program improvements and accounting for successful program implementation and outcomes. Results of data collected throughout the school year (i.e. site visit observations, mid-year surveys, semester gpa's or attendance rates) are often shared with program administrators on an on-going basis to further insure that evaluation is beneficial and participatory rather than punitive.

The outcome model has also continuously improved over the years and is designed to communicate implementation and achievement results to school community stakeholders and to hold programs accountable for achieving their set goals. The layout of the reports is as follows:

- Program Design which provides information regarding program history (how the program was developed and has evolved over the years), objectives, staff qualifications and training, a theoretical rationale for why the program is needed and an educational rationale for how the program is designed (description of published research that supports the program model).
- Program Implementation which includes descriptions of process methodology such as the process for identification of participants, activities conducted, detailed accounts of implementation procedures, and perceived barriers and supports provided by stakeholders (school/program staff, students, and parents).
- Program Outcomes gives us the findings of the program implementation. It begins with a description of the survey design process, sampling methods and analysis methods. Also, the quantitative design: instruments used, kind of design (e.g. pre-post, comparison), and statistical tests to be used are described. The key findings from surveys are synthesized and discussed in this section. Survey results include discussions that focus around common themes, discrepancies and perceived success of the program. Analysis of data in relation to the key outcomes is also done in accordance with a quantitative research design. Lastly, suggestions for improvement

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of the program are provided keeping in mind the goal that the program needs to be more effective in achieving its outcomes.

The audience for these reports is the program director, district administrators, the Superintendent, the Board of Education, the state monitors and the committee of experts.

Program Accountability: Decision-Making Based on Evidence

Communication of results and decision-making has also improved over the years. Evaluation reports that were produced during the first year merely confirmed success and practice of the evaluation model. In its second year of implementation, procedural and evaluative recommendations were made to program directors and district administrators in charge of the programs.

During the third year of practice, 1996-97, the department was able to have major impact in terms of decisions with regards to Consent Degree programs (see Table 3). Using both formative and summative information from the evaluation reports, three types of decisions emerged. Programs that did not show improvement over the three-year period were given a "red light" or were discontinued. This was equivalent to 27% (4/ 15) of the Consent Decree programs. Programs that had the purpose and planning components in place but had not yet yielded success with regards to implementation were given a "yellow light" and another year to work on their barriers. These were equivalent to 43% (7/15) of Consent Decree programs. Twenty percent (3/15) of programs received a "Green light" for demonstrating continual success with students. Table 3 on the following page is an excerpt of the program summary matrix with regards to our decisions at the end of every school year.

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Table 3: Excerpt from Program Decision Summary Matrix

Funding	Program Description	Decision			Reasons
$157,885	Program designed to help students achieve Chinese oral and written language proficiency			Green	1. Grant funded 2. Unique, before and after school Cantonese/Mandarin language program 3. Students and parents rated the program as very good
$100,000	A Latino retention program for high school students	Red			1. Serves very few students 2. No significant gains on GPA or CTBS 3. Students served were not at-risk (CTBS scores were at the national average, GPA was over 2.0, and attendance over 80%.)
$50,000	An after-school program for high achieving African American students.		Yellow		1. One years growth on CTBS 2. No difference from comparison group 3. Unique, serves as an after school site for African American students
$185,000	Program that offers tutorial services to at-risk students with GPA<2.0	Red			1. Significant decrease in GPA 2. Significant decrease in attendance 3. Graduation rate 65.6%
	Early intervention Reading Program		Yellow		1. Significantly lower performance than a random sample of similar grade students, no difference between successful and unsuccessful (as per program measures) AA/L students on the CTBS reading sub-test 2. High attrition rate, no follow-up for unsuccessful students 3. Unique, serves a population that needs the extra assistance

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Implications

The experience of RPE and District staff has shown that it is possible to develop and implement an evaluation approach. which is usable in a large school district, which operates many projects. Several benefits have emerged from our work to date. First, budgetary decisions are being made in the district based on the evaluation results. Second, administrators have a clear set of expectations that must be considered when implementing and evaluating before-, after-, and in-school programs. Third, evidence from current year evaluations suggests that projects are becoming more focused as the level of accountability to the Consent Decree office and District is increasing. Use of a systematic approach to evaluation has highlighted weaknesses in some programs. Poorly designed projects are being forced to develop more coherent frameworks and activities or risk losing future funding. The District is benefiting from having a common framework for analyzing programs by providing administrators with more data to make informed decisions about the costs and benefits of alternative approaches to meeting the same goals.

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